



Laura Cooper

DNR's Snoqualmie Corridor Planning Gets Into High Gear

By Rick McGuire

After a busy summer, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) "Snoqualmie Corridor" planning effort has gotten into high gear, with many field trips and much research and thought going into where and how best to meet the ever-growing demand for outdoor recreation on DNR-managed state lands near I-90 east of Seattle.

DNR has assembled a first-class team of experts for this effort, overseen by area manager Doug McClelland,

a multi-decade veteran with a deep interest in and encyclopedic knowledge of the lands entrusted to his care. He is ably assisted by other DNR staff, including Laura Cooper, an intern from the U.W. College of the Environment who has been hired to coordinate the actual planning process.

Also central to the effort is a seventeen-member citizen advisory board assembled by DNR, comprised of representatives from many different groups with

Continued on page 2

Photo: Gifford Lakes.

Also in this issue:

- North Fork Snoqualmie hydro threat continues 3
- New Beckler Peak Trail open for hiking..... 3
- Upcoming DEIS for Travel Management: Where will off-road motorized vehicles be allowed in the Alpine Lakes area? 4
- Trustee ballot 5
- NRA proposals threaten National Forest lands in Kittitas County 7

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Continued from page 1

interests in conservation and recreation on the state lands in the planning area. ALPS is represented on the committee, in keeping with its decades-long involvement in the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and other public lands west of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

During the spring, the citizen committee met a number of times to learn about the biology, geology, stability, and other features of the landscape. These form a guide to where various types of recreational developments should or should not happen. Extensive areas of unstable clay in the lower Middle Fork valley, for instance, present problems there, but fortunately there are many other areas that do not face such constraints.

Now that the outlines have mostly been drawn regarding physical limitations, the fun part of the process has begun. Committee members have taken many trips

to various places to get an idea of their suitability and attractiveness for new trails. Of particular interest to many is the Raging River country. This comprises about 10,000 acres, most of it newly acquired state lands south of I-90 and east of state Highway 18. The valley's size, accessibility and relative lack of geological constraints make it a great blank slate upon which to draw an entirely new map with many miles of new hiker, horse, and mountain bike trails.

From an ALPS perspective, probably the most interesting area being looked at is the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and its tributary Granite Creek. The Granite Creek valley enters the Middle Fork from the southeast, and sits one ridge north from I-90. DNR has already begun work on a new hiker trail climbing from the Middle Fork to the top of "Mailbox Peak." The old

Granite Creek road is also being decommissioned and turned into trail.

A number of appealing new trail possibilities is being looked at in this area. If a new trailhead could be located on the South Fork Snoqualmie side, trails might be able to be built to the divide ridge above "Dirty Harry's Balcony", i.e., between the South Fork Snoqualmie River and Granite Creek. These could also include a spur to the summit of West Defiance Mountain, and a connection down to upper Granite Creek. Other possibilities are a trail along the ridge top southeast from the Mailbox summit to connect with the ridge above "Dirty Harry's", and a trail from a new South Fork trailhead directly to the Mailbox summit, allowing for scenic loops starting and ending at the same place. Other viewpoints and routes are also being looked at, all of which could ultimately lead to an entire new system of very accessible and attractive trails and loops just east of North Bend.

The citizen committee will likely produce a map delineating a number of new trail ideas, probably with some sort of prioritization, with some projects slated for early development and others remaining more conceptual, to be looked at later as other projects are finished. Once the ideas are down on paper, the challenge will be to find money to get them built. As ever, large trailheads with sufficient parking will need to be developed first in order to accommodate the heavy use which is guaranteed in these areas so close to Seattle. ALPS looks forward to continuing to work with DNR in turning the vision into reality. ■



View up Middle Fork Snoqualmie valley.

KEVIN GERAGHTY

North Fork Snoqualmie Hydro Threat Continues

On June 19th, ALPS participated in a scoping meeting conducted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regarding the proposed “Black Canyon” hydroelectric project on the North Fork Snoqualmie River north of North Bend. The project would divert water from the river upstream from “Ernie’s Gorge,” generate a small amount of electricity and return it to the river below the gorge. ALPS testimony centered on the project’s proposed dewatering of the North Fork where it flows through the northwestern corner of the Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA). NRCAs are

essentially Washington State’s equivalent of Wilderness areas, to be managed for conservation of natural features.

Taking water out of a river and using it to generate a small amount of power is clearly not what NRCAs were established for. The project proponents are taking the view that the river “abuts” the NRCA, and is not within it. ALPS’ position, and that of the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) which manages the NRCA, is that the river is indeed within the NRCA. Beds of navigable rivers are considered state “land,” and as a

number of kayakers testified at the meeting, they navigate the North Fork canyon on a regular basis.

ALPS and others testified that FERC should not even be considering a project such as this, which so clearly contravenes the purposes of the NRCA. But FERC’s process is heavily weighted toward developers. It will be interesting to see if project proponents are able to advance their view that the North Fork is not really within the NRCA, and can prevail over the DNR, ALPS, and other conservation groups. ALPS will stay closely involved and continue efforts to keep the North Fork Snoqualmie flowing freely. ■

New Beckler Peak Trail Open for Hiking

The new trail to the summit of Beckler Peak, just northeast of the town of Skykomish, is now officially open. The trail climbs from about 3000 feet up to Beckler summit at about 5000 feet, traversing some pleasant old growth forest en route to expansive views of the Skykomish country and the northern Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Unlike most of the other old logging roads in the Skykomish area, the road climbing the south side of Beckler Peak to the “Jennifer Dunn Trailhead” where the Beckler trail begins traverses relatively stable ground. It has mostly avoided the repeated, expensive rebuilds which plague other roads such as the one up Evergreen Mountain to the north.

This trail was first suggested by ALPS members back around 1990. ALPS and some of its sister conservation groups have sometimes been accused of making

it more difficult for people to “access” public lands, because of our opposition to endless rebuilds of some collapsing old logging roads, which do tremendous damage to fisheries and watersheds. However, ALPS has been the leader in exploring and proposing new trails in the central Cascades, of which Beckler Peak is one example, hopefully to be followed by many more, both in the Skykomish area and further south near I-90 (see accompanying article.)

ALPS believes it will not be possible to continually rebuild many of the poorly designed and constructed legacy logging roads in the Cascades, and that new trails need to be developed which do not need to be accessed from these crumbling old roads. ALPS plans to continue its efforts to develop a sustainable recreational

infrastructure to allow people to continue to enjoy their public lands in years ahead. ■



Mountain sunlight restoration.

Upcoming DEIS for Travel Management:

Where will off-road motorized vehicles be allowed in the Alpine Lakes area?

By Charlie Raymond

Over the last decade and more, the threat to the National Forests from unmanaged off road vehicles (ORVs) has become increasingly evident. Furthermore, the US Forest Service (FS) had not responded with clear action to implement long-standing Presidential directives to: "... establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands." The first concrete action came in 2005, when the FS introduced the National Travel Management Rule. Once implemented the rule will close all National Forest areas to motorized travel including ORVs except on designated routes and in limited areas identified on published maps.

Travel Management will be a great improvement over the present situation. Present practice effectively leaves all lands open to ORVs except in congressionally designated wilderness areas or otherwise explicitly identified administratively closed places. Cross-country riding is not unambiguously prohibited. Travel Management can bring a much-needed objective basis for management and enforcement.

In response to the 2005 Rule, the Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest has engaged in a multi-year effort of public outreach aimed primarily at motorized recreation and environmental analysis guided by the National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will present a range of alternatives for maps of routes open to ORVs. Its release by the FS, expected early in the New Year, represents an important step toward a decision about the published map of routes open to motorized travel. That map will be an unambiguous, enforceable answer to where ORVs and other vehicles can legally go.

Definitive information about the content of specific Alternatives will not be available until publication of the DEIS. Preliminary information from the FS indicates that there will be five Alternatives including one that is "preferred" by the FS. In the Alpine Lakes Area (between I-90 and US 2), we expect the preferred Alternative to be very similar to present maps showing trails that are open and closed to ORVs. Within this area, off-road motorized activity is concentrated in the Teanaway and adjacent areas, which altogether form the largest contiguous inventoried roadless area near the Alpine Lakes. We expect two Alternatives that significantly reduce the range of motorized use on trails. These Alternatives would be significant steps toward the ALPS vision of maintaining a large area in the Teanaway coupled to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness for healthy watersheds and habitat connectivity as well as quiet recreation opportunities.

Until now, most of the FS outreach has been directed toward motorized recreationists. Indeed, the invitation for input to Travel Management on the FS web site and in other communications has been along the lines of the

question posed in the title of this article. People wanting motorized recreation opportunities have responded in large numbers. A directly related question is: where will people be able to find quality opportunities for a spectrum of quiet recreation activities like hiking and horseback riding on primitive trails in an undisturbed environment? The DEIS provides the most important opportunity for environmentally-oriented people to express their views concerning non-motorized recreation opportunities. We need to speak up loud and clear at this critical time.

Please visit the OOWNF web site for Travel Management: www.fs.usda.gov/detail/okawen/landmanagement/projects?cid=fsbdev3_053614 to track the DEIS. Call the Cle Elum District Office (509 852-1100) and the OOWNF Supervisor's Office (509 664-9200). Ask for reduced motorization in the Teanaway and add your name to the contact list for the Travel Management DEIS. And please comment on the DEIS.

An emerging twist in the future of motorized recreation in the Alpine Lakes area has recently arisen with a proposal for a Congressionally designated National Recreation Area spread along the south boundary of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. If this proposal were implemented, it could greatly increase motorized use in the Teanaway, as well as set dangerous precedents more broadly affecting public lands (article in this issue of the *Alpine*).

Trustees Election Ballot

It's time for another ALPS Trustees election. This one will be for the 2012-2015 term. All four candidates — Bill Beyers, Jim Chapman, Kevin Geraghty and Charlie Raymond — are running for re-election.

We still have some vacancies on the board, so are providing space for you to suggest someone for us to appoint. If you yourself are interested or would like to attend one of our meetings, contact President Rick McGuire at 206-363-6954 or rckmcguire@gmail.com.

Bill Beyers, Seattle, Professor of Geography at University of Washington. ALPS Trustee/Officer from ca. 1972-1983, ALPS President 1974-76. Was quite active in the campaign to pass the legislation enacted by Congress in 1976 that established the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and Management Unit. Bill left the ALPS Board in the early 1980s, feeling that membership on it should rotate. In 2000, he helped do a fiscal impact analysis that was a critical part of getting the Kittitas County Commissioners' support for The Cascades Checkerboard Partnership's project. Bill has

also led the team that brought the 4th edition of the Alpine Lakes map to production, with the goal of having this product bring a revenue stream to ALPS, and to stimulate new memberships.

Jim Chapman, Edmonds, retired engineer, ALPS Trustee/officer since 1973. President, 1978-80 and 1989-92. Current Secretary. Worked on several land exchanges, including two with Longview Fibre and the I-90 exchange with Plum Creek. Lobbied Congress for money to buy parcels on Icicle Ridge, along Icicle River and in Silver Creek watershed. Was ALPS representative to The Cascades Conservation Partnership and is now its representative to the Advisory Board of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust.

Kevin Geraghty, Seattle, replaced the late Henry Steinhardt in 2002. Interested in forestry issues including Lowe Creek, Natapoc Mountain and Roaring Thin timber sale.

Charlie Raymond, Seattle, Professor Emeritus of Geophysics at University of Washington studying snow, ice

and climate change. Charlie is a long-time member of ALPS who joined the ALPS board in 2004 to become more active in local environmental advocacy. His main interest is in preserving wilderness and protecting surrounding areas. Present emphasis is on ORV and snowmobile issues, especially in the Cle Elum Ranger District. He owns a cabin in the Cle Elum area.

Please mark the ballot below for four trustees, fold it and tape it closed. Mail to the address on the backside of this sheet.

- Bill Beyers
- Jim Chapman
- Kevin Geraghty
- Charlie Raymond

(Suggested New Trustee)



Snowbrush in Summer.

RICK MCGUIRE, PRESIDENT
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NRA Proposals Threaten National Forest Lands in Kittitas County

by Karl Forsgaard

Proposals for two new National Recreation Areas (NRAs) from a “Yakima Workgroup” convened by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec) and the State Department of Ecology are threatening to greatly increase ORV use on National Forest lands in the Cle Elum Ranger District.

The Workgroup consists of representatives selected by BuRec to find means of providing additional irrigation water for Yakima valley agribusiness. Its centerpiece is a recommendation for a new dam at Bumping Lake that would destroy a large area of ancient forest in the south Cascades, adjacent to the William O. Douglas Wilderness. Also in the mix are various recommendations intended as sweeteners in hopes of generating support for the group’s “Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.” With an estimated cost of up to \$5 billion, the Yakima Plan would be the largest project in the State of Washington since WPPSS (the ill-fated nuclear power plan that collapsed in the early 1980s).

One such sweetener of great concern to ALPS is a recommendation for new NRAs dedicated to motorized off-road use by all-terrain vehicles, 4x4s and motorcycles on trails, and cross-country snowmobiles. The proposed NRAs are located both north and south of I-90 in the Teanaway, Taneum and Manastash areas of Kittitas County. If enacted, these NRAs are intended to Congressionally lock in off-road vehicle use and “attract more users” i.e. increase motorized recreational use on these parts of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Off-road vehicles have well documented histories of severe

detrimental effects on soils, fish and wildlife, and usually drive away all other recreational use.

ALPS has concerns not only about the bad effects of increased ORV use but also about the way this proposal was developed, in near-secrecy. BuRec incorporated the proposal into its Final EIS on the Yakima Plan at the very last minute, failing to allow any public comment on the NRAs. The Cle Elum Ranger District was not consulted about the proposal, nor were the many conservation groups working in this area, dozens of which subsequently objected to the proposal.

As we went to press, Plan supporters were responding to the justifiable criticism by gathering input from the conservation organizations they had previously blindsided. In a series of meetings with a professional facilitator paid by BuRec and Ecology, Plan supporters are still trying to stack the deck and resist any change to their bad ideas. For example, the facilitator wrote that several of our proposed discussion topics were “outside of the scope” of the meetings with conservationists, including:

- Lack of opportunity for public comment on the NRA proposal.
- ORV designations are better dealt with in the National Forest travel management and forest planning processes, not the Yakima Plan.
- Ways that ORV designations in the Yakima Plan would set a bad precedent and negatively impact future lands protection efforts.
- Risks of negative changes during the legislative process.
- Past policy statements of The Wilderness Society et al. opposing statutory mandates for ORV use in lands legislation.

BuRec’s facilitator also wrote that these topics “will not be discussed” and “I will not be considering them as I assist the Workgroup.”

If allowed to go ahead, this NRA proposal will amount to a virtual takeover of large parts of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest by motorized recreation. ALPS plans to do all it can to stop this very destructive proposal, or at least make the bad precedent less bad. ■



CHARLIE RAYMOND

Looking northward along the divide between Jolly and Paris Creeks in the Teanaway Roadless Area.



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KEVIN GERAGHTY

Beaver pond in Pratt River valley.



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